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Amra is published from time to time at & from Box 8243, Philadelphia PA 19101, at \$0.75 the copy, subscriptions of ten for \$6. Backish (v2#46 thru 64) may be had at \$0.75 each, or ten or more for \$0.70 each. Great Britons may order through our Great Britannic & Erse Arch-Agent, A Mercer, of 21 Trenethick Parc, Helston, Cornwall, TR13 8LH; price in sterling is governed by whatever the exchange is at time of order. We also have reprint copies of v2#1, 2, & 3 at \$1 each.



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This is sort of an advance, just-in-case apology: as you are aware, the Terminus, Owlswick, & Ft Mudge Electrick Street Railway Gazette's other head is the Owlswick Press, publisher of *CITIES & SCENES FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD* (180 illos, hard covers, \$16). In the process of preparing this volume, as well as the forthcoming but delayed *SWORDSMEN & SAURIANS FROM THE MESOZOIC TO BARSOOM*, we have handled hundreds and hundreds of Krenkel drawings and negatives of same. Illos have moved from Amra file to book and back. As a result, it is becoming sometimes exceedingly difficult to keep track of just which illos have appeared before and which have not. Eventually, we fear, we may inadvertantly re-run such an illo; if we do, forgive us -- or we'll hit you!

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THUDS are (is?) an *Amra* editorial column. Other departments are Swackles (letters), Scrolls (reviews), Blunders (more editorial stuff), Sherds (short Scrolls), and Bashes (yet more editorial comment), all of whose derivation should be obvious.

AGAIN, the editorial horde must apologize for taking so long since the last ish of *Amra*. However, we don't have to apologize for how long it takes for the next ish to follow; in celebration of our *twentyth* year of publication -- our double tennish, so to speak -- we are putting out v2#65 & #66 together, all in the same envelope. We keep promising that the nextish will be sooner -- we ywiss hope we can keep that promise with v2#67.

IT HAS BEEN a long and exciting twenty years, too; see "Thuds" in v2#66 for more on that. It's been expensive too; unlike our recent competitors, *Amra* was not conceived as a money-making enterprise. In only a few of our years has income exceeded expenses, and then usually because of a lapse in publication schedule permitted backish sales to more than offset the usual losses in current publishing.

MOSTLY, we credit our avowedly irregular schedule for our longevity: whenever our numerous & unruly staff got bored with emitting *Amrât*, we just let things slide for a while until enthusiasm built up again. And, we'd like to remind our competitors, fanpublishing is supposed to be for fun and for the subscribers; and money is a reward, not a reason. (But to be entirely honest, we must admit that there is a fanzine older than ours -- *Yandro* -- that's lots more regular; and if we find someone that's getting rich, fanpubbing, and enjoying it too, we'd be the first to copy his technique.)

SINCE it has been so long a time between thish and the last one, a lot of reviewworthy books have piled up; and more than half this *Amra* is occupied by reviews. However, one should not assume from this that we intend this to become primarily a book review fanzine, any more than one should take v2#66 to be proof that *Amra* is to spend its next decade muttering in its beards about what happened during the first two. Instead, we do try to make each issue different from the others and -- sometimes -- not even like itself!

AS a Conan fanzine, we can make no pretense to objectivity in mentioning Howard or Conan material. This is the kind of stuff *Amra* is all about:

THE GREY GOD PASSES, by R E Howard; illustrated by Walter Simonsen: 36 pp, paper covers, \$4 from Chuck Miller, 239 N 4th St, Columbia PA 17512.

RED NAILS, by R E H, illos by George Barr: 142 pp, cloth, \$15 from Don Grant, West Kingston RI 02892. From the same publisher: *THE BOWL OF BAAL*, by R A Bennet; illos by David Ireland: 351 pp, cloth, \$7.50. *OUT OF THE STORM*, by W H Hodgson; illos (lots!) by Stephen Fabian: 304 pp, cloth, \$10. Coming soon: *BLACK VULMEA'S VENGEANCE*, by R E H; illos by Robert Pailthope; and *THE IRON MAN*, by R E H; illos by David Ireland.

BLOODSTAR is credited to R E H and John Jakes; it is a 8½x11, hard-cover, 100 pp book in "comic-book" form and is a slight revision of "The Valley of the Worm". \$15 from Morning Star Press, Box 6011, Leawood KS 66206.

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Gratuity

by & © by L Sprague
de Camp 1976

A courier bold for his king was Sir Eustace de Vaux.
He carried his messages bravely in rain and in snow;
And when to the city of Lin came the Tartar array,
His sovran commanded that swift to seek succor he go.

"The fate of the kingdom, Sir Eustace, dependeth on thee,
For if," quoth the monarch, "this city, which now is the key
To all the kingdom, shall fall to the barbarous foe,
Then slaughtered will all of our people assuredly be."

"My mettlesome stallion is saddled --" the envoy began;
The king interrupted: "A horse is too slow, my good man.
So go ye forthwith to the West by commercial airline
And get to the field of the dragons as quick as ye can."

Sir Eustace did pale. "On the ground, there's no foe that I fear;
But, sire, I never have flown!" Said the king: "It is clear
That now ye must learn to. So here is gold for your fare.
A flight is reserved, and the pilot knows whither to steer."

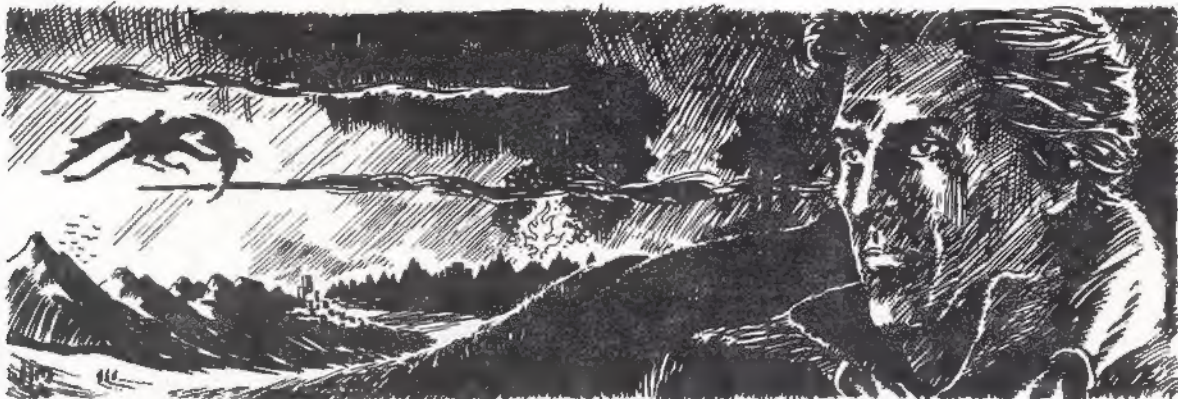
As Eustace approached it, the dragon indifferently stared
And shot out a tongue bifurcated. The driver declared:
"Oh, fear not my Marigold, sir. She will give you as soft
A journey as if on a sofa ye rested, me laird!"

The flight was routine, and the dragon at last came aland
At where stood the tent of the western division's command.
Sir Eustace then proffered the gold from the king for his fare.
"But sir!" said the driver, "I fear ye do not understand!"

"This fare must be given my master, who owneth the beast;
From what ye have paid me, that leaveth me nought in the least!
Your ride was as steady as if on a settle ye sate,
So by ten per centum me palm should by custom be greased."

"What meanest thou, varlet?" said Eustace, and reddened with rage.
"'Tis not my affair, what thy master doth give thee as wage!
The gold of thy sovran hath paid thee a suitable fee,
And thinkst thou I'd yield mine own money, thy greed to assuage?"

"Nae tip!" cried the pilot. "Thou skinflint, I'll give thee to pause!
O Marigold, get him!" One snap of the saurian's jaws,
And Eustace the Bold was devoured. The Tartars prevailed.
So perished a glorious kingdom from trivial cause. ###



Thoughts

ON NEMEDIAN POLITICS & GOVERNMENT by JOHN E STAIB

In glancing over the doings of the Hyborian Age it is easy to get the impression that all peoples involved did little else save plot, slay, and generally savage one another to such an extent that little could be done in pursuit of nation-building and rational, well thought out policies and actions. Nearly every time the chronicles of Conan mention the internal conditions of a state or give enough data from which to infer those conditions, that state is seething with intrigue and is ready to dissolve into a morass of blood.

Cimmeria and Pictdom are snakepits of feuding clans. Stygia is an arena for contending factions of wizards and princes. Zingara is in chronic civil war and Shem is merely a geographical expression. Koth scarcely exists as a unified state, and nearly everything else west of Turan is in a similar condition. Even mighty Aquilonia, most powerful of all the western nations, falls apart the instant King Conan is out of sight; it simply lacks the cohesion to function as befits a great nation. But one Hyborean people was capable of considerable achievements in nation-building and logical planning -- the Nemedians. Consider the following:

In *CONAN THE CONQUEROR*, after Tarascus ascends the throne -- which he does smoothly and without complications despite the recent unrest during the black plague -- he can at once call out, muster, and put into motion an army of 50,000 men. True, Aquilonia can field a host of 45,000 to meet the Nemedians; but that host is short by 10,000 Poitanians who must come up from a far corner of the kingdom. Nemedias is also a far-flung realm, but there is no mention of any of its units being late. Moreover, one suspects that Conan began his mobilization early, since he was suspicious as early as the black plague^{*1} and was also shrewd enough to perceive the probable rôle of Amalric of Tor.² Tarascus, on the other hand, would not dare to begin his mobilization too early lest he give away his plans. Given these data, it seems that Nemedias's infrastructure was developed enough to mobilize far more rapidly than Aquilonia's could.

Furthermore, the Nemedian host is sufficiently well organized and disciplined that immediately after the Battle of Valkia it pushed on to Tarantia, occupied it, and at once dispatched expeditionary forces to fan out and occupy eastern and central Aquilonia. In Tarantia itself, order was established at once so that there was no rioting or resistance of any sort. Given the volatility of the Tarantian populace³ this alone was no mean feat, yet all of this was done in only four days.

(The period of four days for the Nemedians to defeat the Aquilonians and then push on to Tarantia and points west can be worked out by counting the dawns and sunsets mentioned. In the Lancer edition of *CONAN THE CONQUEROR*, this sequence appears on pages 32-92:

First day: Battle of Valkia begins at dawn and is concluded. Conan is captured and taken to Belverus by Xaltotun.

Second day: Conan talks to Xaltotun, is imprisoned, and escapes.

Third day: Conan meets Zalata, saves her from Nemedian stragglers and spends the night in her hut.

* Superscript numerals refer to notes at the end of this essay.



Fourth day: Conan rides into Aquilonia and reaches Tarantia with a stopover at the house of Servius Galannus where he catches up on the news.)

While it is true that these are military operations and not government matters in a civil sense, nevertheless a mobilization is largely organized and carried out by civil authorities; and only a well-organized society could field such disciplined, fast-moving, hard-hitting armies. Ancient Rome and modern Israel are both good examples of this.

It is evident that the Nemedian advance stopped only when their own troops had spread over as much territory as they could possibly cover and had to rely on pro-Valerius Aquilonian collaborators. Valerius himself delayed things as much as he could when he perceived himself to be merely Amalric's pawn. These two factors, unreliable Aquilonian levies and a balky Valerius, were most fortunate for Conan as they undoubtedly did much to let the Gundermen, Bossonians, and Poitanians to retain their freedom. (In Poitain's case at least, geography also did much by providing a wall of "towering mountains"⁴.)

The most convincing indication that Nemedias had a well-knit government comes at the end of *CONAN THE CONQUEROR*. Look over the terms Conan sets Tarascus and remember that all of these terms are to be carried out while Tarascus himself is held captive, and hence cannot personally see to them.

- a) All Nemedian troops to disarm and return to Nemedias.
- b) All enslaved Aquilonians to be returned.
- c) Nemedias to pay indemnity for all war damages.⁵

As Tarascus cannot supervise these matters personally, it follows that his bureaucracy must carry them out and that his bureaucracy must be both extensive and efficient to do so. Recall for instance that Aquilonian slaves are sold to Kothic traders for disposal as far afield as Shem and Turan.⁶ All are to be tracked down, purchased, and returned; this is no task for a weak state structure, yet Conan shows no anxiety over the matter being done.

Perhaps even more convincing is the fact that Conan shows no anxiety over the indemnity either -- certainly a huge sum. He knows that Tarascus's officials can collect it, and to do this they must keep the country quiet in his absence, even while collecting extraordinarily heavy taxes, no easy matter indeed.

Not only the Nemedian national government is well organized; city administrations are also well-knit, as can be seen in "The God in the Bowl", part of the book *CONAN*. In this chronicle we see the Numalian police system in action, and a most efficient one it is. Admittedly they fail when they try to seize young Conan, but there are limits to anyone's ability. In this adventure, the watchman in Kallian Publico's temple rings a bell to summon the watch, which responds with commendable speed and great skill. These efficient men both enter the temple in force and simultaneously surround the entire building with crossbowmen to prevent escape from the scene.

The organization of the Numalian police is not described in detail. It is "all powerful"⁷, and Demetrio, head of the city's Inquisitorial Council, conducts his investigation rapidly and skillfully. He is so keen on doing his duty that he himself is with a police patrol that night. Considering that he must have many other duties, he is obviously a dedicated, conscientious servant of the government. If Demetrio is in any way typical of the Nemedian civil service, it was efficient indeed!

While it is true that the Numalian police are quite arbitrary, overly free with torture, and not too scrupulous in exposing the rich and powerful (such as the nephew of the city's governor), one suspects that this is a local condition. After all, if such oppression were widespread in the kingdom it would certainly crush out the hardy, questing, adventurous Nemedian spirit, a spirit that is apparent throughout the Conan chronicles.

While an extended treatment of this Nemedian spirit would be out of place here, consider the Nemedians which one meets in the chronicles: Taurus of Nemedias, daring prince of thieves;⁸ Demetrio of Numalia, keen and dedicated civil servant; Amalric, capable commander of the mercenaries of Khoraja;⁹ the savant Astreas with his nevertiring thirst and search for knowledge;¹⁰ and of course Amalric of Tor with his subtle, brilliant schemes, courageous Tarascus, and the brilliant though short-sighted Orastes.

We now come to a perplexing matter: what institutions or methods did the kings of Nemedias use to organize their country? As far as I can discover there are only two hints in the chronicles.

The first hint is the use of an Inquisitorial Council as seen at Numalia; even if conducted without the arbitrary and cruel excesses of Numalia's police, such a group would



be most valuable in rooting out trouble-makers such as Arpello of Pellia or the Rebel Four, who plagued neighboring Aquilonia.

Secondly, the Nemedian Adventurers could act at need as trouble-shooters, reliable officers, or -- when gathered together -- a reliable strong-arm squad. If the one member of this class which we meet is any indication of the quality of these men, they are clearly shrewd, tough, and ready to grasp any opportunity.¹¹ They are also loyal to the Nemedian crown above all other things; they are accountable only to the king and must have done much to earn such a privilege.

We come finally to an important consideration: if Nemedia was so powerful and well-organized, why was it not supreme in the western world instead of Aquilonia? The basic reason would seem to lie in Nemedia's unfortunate geographical position. Look at the map of the Hyborian Age and put yourself in the position of Nemedia. On the west is your powerful, aggressive, and implacable enemy, Aquilonia. On the east and south are the grasping, cunning, savage Turanians; well organized and with a powerful cavalry able to cover vast distances. True there are a number of potential buffers: Zamora, Brythunia, and Corinthia on the east; Koth and Ophir on the south to block a Turanian from Shem. None of these buffers is worth much, however, and none stops the Turanians from reaching the borders of Nemedia.¹²

On the north, only the Border Kingdom, so unimportant that it has no proper name, separates Nemedia from the ferocious Cimmerians, who are certainly not ones to let such trivial obstacles as the Border Kingdom block their plundering forays.

It is readily apparent that the Nemedians developed their efficient political and military systems in response to these threats. It is also obvious that they were highly successful in defending themselves, though not so fortunate in extending their lands. Consider the evidence that Nemedia can maintain itself against all comers.

Firstly: The Turanians reach only to the borders of Nemedia;¹³ they do not penetrate Nemedia itself until a long time after the reign of Conan.

Secondly: The Aquilonians demand no territorial concessions even after their victory in the great war; they know they will not get anything even after such a triumph. Only by long, arduous, grinding campaigns can they hope to gain more land.

Thirdly: The Cimmerians seldom if ever manage to get through the Nemedian border guards. In this connection note the comment of the wandering scholar Astreas: "... the captain of the queen's guard ... Conan ... one of those gloomy Cimmerians whose ferocity our soldiers have more than once learned to their bitter cost."¹⁴ (Emphasis added.) Note that Nemedians soldiers know about Cimmerians, not Nemedian civilians. Also in "The God in the Bowl", there are indications that the Nemedians even send punitive expeditions into the Cimmerian hills and many return to tell the tale -- in notable contrast to the Aquilonians at Venarium. Note too that when Arus exclaims that Conan could not climb the temple wall Demetrio replies, "Have you never seen a Cimmerian scale a sheer cliff?"¹⁵ Later, when Demetrio decided that even a Cimmerian could not climb a smooth pillar, one of his men replied, "A Cimmerian could," and Demetrio admits that one might at that. The implication, of course, is that Nemedian officialdom and police (perhaps they comprise a subdivision of the army?) are well acquainted with Cimmerians but that a stay-at-home civilian such as Arus is not. Where else would they see Cimmerians scaling sheer cliffs

enough to know that a Cimmerian could scale a pillar than in Cimmeria itself? What would Nemedian officials and police (soldiers?) be doing in Cimmeria except as members of a punitive expedition?

With the above considerations of Nemedian government and geography, it becomes clear that the Nemedian invasion of Aquilonia was not merely one kingdom attacking another in mindless pursuit of a hereditary feud; it was a highly intelligent decision to attempt the destruction of one of Nemedia's main foes and to break a *de facto* encirclement.

An invasion of Cimmeria against the Border Kingdom would have been fruitless since Cimmerian society was not highly enough developed to be conquered save clan by clan by clan -- a task lasting several years at best with but little long-term advantage. Turan, though dangerous, was too powerful to be destroyed by Nemedia alone and probably had an established dynasty to replace Yezdigerd should he die. Aquilonia, on the other hand, was a fairly good prospect for destruction as an independent power and eventual annexation.

Consider that Aquilonia lacked a dynasty to replace King Conan with a crown prince to rally around, that it had a weak infrastructure, that it was split by internal rivalries (e.g., the distrust of Tarantians for Trocero), and that it possessed a potential fifth column of pro-Valerius nobles. The destruction of Aquilonian power and the incorporation of its men and wealth into Nemedia would make the ruler of Nemedia capable of building up quite an empire.¹⁶

In conclusion, one may state that Nemedia was indeed a remarkable country for the Hyborean Age. It was well organized in both civil and military matters. It was the home of an adventurous, striving people well able to look out for themselves and to use their impressive organization in an effective way. This toughness and skill at organization continued to characterize them as long as Hyborian civilization lasted. Nemedia was the last Hyborean state to fall, and even that was only after extended strife with Picts, Cimmerians, Hyrkanians, and the northern tribesmen.



NOTES (all references are to the editions published by Lancer Books)

1. Howard, R E; de Camp, L S (ed.), *CONAN THE CONQUEROR*, 1967, p 27.
2. *ibid.*, p 43.
3. Howard, R E; de Camp, L S (ed), *CONAN THE USURPER*, 1967, pp 205-256, "SC".
4. *CONAN THE CONQUEROR*, p 117.
5. *ibid.*, pp 222-223.
6. *ibid.*, p 89.
7. Howard, R E; de Camp, L S; Carter, L, *CONAN*, 1967, p 112, "GB".
8. *ibid.*, pp 51-80, "TE".
9. Howard, R E; de Camp, L S, *CONAN THE FREEBOOTER*, 1968, pp 54-98, "BC".
10. *ibid.*, pp 172-223, "WB".
11. *CONAN THE CONQUEROR*, p 69.
12. Howard, R E; de Camp, L S; Carter, L, *CONAN THE WANDERER*, 1968, p 89, "DI".
13. *ibid.*
14. *CONAN THE FREEBOOTER*, p 195, "WB".
15. *CONAN*, p 113, "GB".
16. *CONAN THE CONQUEROR*, pp 190-197.

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Scrolls

Erich von Däniken: *CHARIOTS OF THE GODS?*, NY: Bantam Books, 1968-1971; x + 163 pp, paper, \$1.25.

The tale of pseudo-scientific best-sellers is a long and, for believers in human rationality, a sad one. Before mass publishing, cult leaders -- the Mesmers, Cagliostros, and Symmeses -- were confined to lecturing, staging conjuring acts and theatrical spectacles, organizing branches, and collecting dues. With the rise of literacy and affluence, publishing became a major source of income for folk like Ignatius Donnelly, Charles Piazzi Smyth, Helena P Blavatsky, Mary Baker Eddy, and James Churchward. Since the 1860s, every decade has seen such ideological forays: Atlantism, Baconianism, Pyramidiology, the Lost Ten Tribes, Fourth-dimensionalism, Nordicism, Cosmic Ice, UFOlogy, and so on.

Many cults thrive under charismatic leaders but dwindle after these leaders die. Then their doctrines are often revived as new discoveries by later cultists. Thus the cometary-collision theory was begun by Count Carli in +XVIII, revived in +XIX by Donnelly, and revived in +XX by Velikovsky. The idea that civilization was founded by extraterrestrials was launched by Mme Blavatsky in the 1880s; now von Däniken has taken it over, with a series of books of which this is the highly successful first.

I recently had the dubious fortune to be on a television show with a follower of von Däniken. Figuring that, if this happened again, I had better be prepared, I got *CHARIOTS*. The contents were no surprise.

As expected, the work is a mass of countless misstatements of fact, e.g. that "the archaeologists say that [the Nazca lines] are Inca roads"; that "a Nile flood did not happen every year"; that the Incas had writing; that the ancient Greeks had no numerals above 10,000; etc, etc. Many statements, like the earth's being "an ordinary star" and an allusion to "the genus *homo sapiens*," are simple illiteracy.

Other statements are, if not *prima facie* absurd, at least very strange in the light of present knowledge: that human-extraterrestrial hybrids are possible (hence demigods); that Joser's step pyramid is superior in workmanship to later ones and Imhotep is buried under it; or that Egypt had 50,000,000 million people in Khufu's time. Von Däniken says that such statements are supported by "authorities". Since the work gives no sources in notes, the reader cannot know who these authorities are or where they made such statements. Sources that are mentioned range from Willy Ley (with whom the author claims to have talked) to Hans Bellamy, who popularized Hörbiger's mad Cosmic Ice theory in English. I can hear Willy spinning in his grave at supersonic speed.

The author takes various spectacular ancient ruins, myths and legends about supernatural beings, and puzzling representations in primitive art, then bends them all to prove visits by otherworlders, who bred and civilized our subhuman ancestors. The ancients could not have imagined airborne gods, angels, and other beings, he says, because "they had no idea that flying beings actually existed" -- as if there were no birds, bats, or insects. Cave drawings of horned beings are e.t.'s in space suits.

Von Däniken takes plausible surmises and inferences, such as the existence of other inhabited planets, and assumes them to be proven facts, which of course they are not. Many of his wild statements he insists must be true because they cannot be disproved. If I tell you that you are followed by a little green man who disappears whenever you try to look at him, you cannot disprove it, but neither are you obliged to take it seriously. Von Däniken, however, has the advantage enjoyed by all such charlatans: a thorough exegesis and exposé of his book would be several times the size of the original. Who would be so mad as to write it and, if he did, who would read it?

Why does this garbage thrive? I do not think that the percentage of credophiles is growing. But the traditional religions have been losing their ideological grip. In the West, Yahveh and his Bible no longer command their former, unquestioning allegiance. People, however, still want something to believe in besides atoms and the void. When science fails to produce it, they seek it elsewhere, as they did in Hellenistic and Imperial Roman times. They want comfort and flattery more than they want facts.

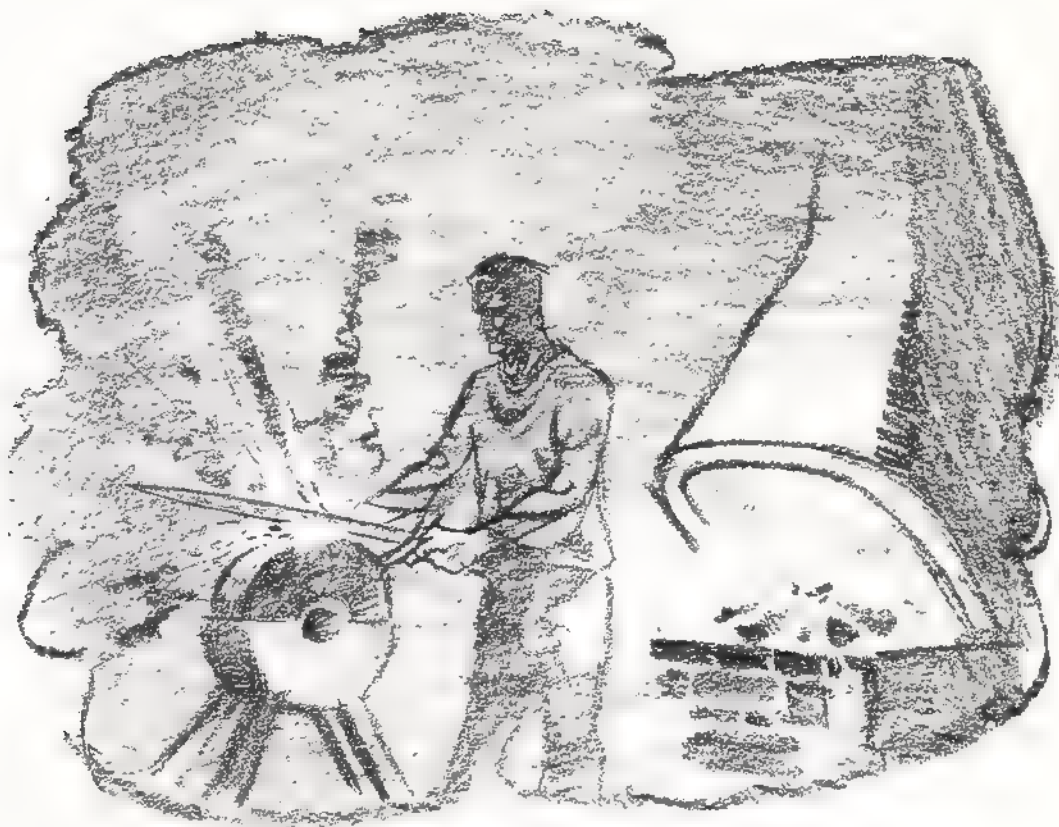
Nowadays the extraterrestrial theme is favored because most people, never having invented anything or had an original idea, find it hard to believe that others have done so. To admit this is to confess that they are stupider than some of their fellow men. In today's super-egalitarian climate, any theory that does away with differences among human beings is welcomed, whether these differences exist or not. Since men have not changed perceptibly in the last five or ten thousand years, there is no reason to think that they will become any less subject to cults, fads, utopian movements, and other irrationalities in the foreseeable future.

L Sprague de Camp #####

Frank Belknap Long: *HOWARD PHILLIPS LOVECRAFT: DREAMER ON THE NIGHTSIDE*, Sauk City WI: Arkham House, 1975, xiv + 237 pp, \$8.50

Of the living men who knew H P Lovecraft personally, none knew him better or over a longer period than Frank Long, who was thirteen years Lovecraft's junior. While there have been many articles of personal reminiscence about Lovecraft (by Barlow, Cook, Muriel Eddy,





"MIDAE MEDITATES REVENGE"

Galpin, Kleiner, Price, Helen Sully, Talman, and Wandrei), none has been of book length. We are lucky to have so extensive a treatment, by one close to him, of this complex, contradictory, and fascinating man. Here are lengthy recollections of Long's talks with HPL, accounts of visits, and glimpses of Lovecraft's idiosyncratic tastes and leanings not hitherto made public.

This is not a biography, but a memoir. It does not go into many sides of Lovecraft's life. It does, however, tell much about his relations with Long -- and quite a bit about Long as well. Lovecraft's personal charm shines through this account.

In such a work, one does not stress the faults of one's best friend. One such fault -- if one so regards it -- does come through. Lovecraft had a streak of defeatism, or what I have elsewhere called a "will-to-failure". When opportunity seemed to hover in the distance, he would say that "a poor old gentleman like me could never do that!" without even trying. At least twice, he foisted the same idea on Long, assuring Long that he was too much this or that ever to succeed at a proposed activity. Objectively, he may have been right; but I do not think he did his young friend a favor by squelching his ambitions at the start.

In any case, this is a delightful book and a must for all Lovecraftians.

L Sprague de Camp #####

Evangeline Walton: *PRINCE OF ANNWN*, NY: Ballantine Books, 1974; 179 pp, paper, \$1.50

Miss Walton has completed her *MABINOGION* novels with this retelling of the First Branch, telling of Pwyll's service to Arawn, king in Annwn, of the coming of Rhiannon, of Pwyll's foolish promise to Gwawl at the wedding feast and his later deception. The disappearance and return of Pryderi are not here, having been recounted in Chapter 2 of *THE SONG OF RHIANNON*. The original story was no more than an outline, to be fleshed out with incident, motive, and meaning. Miss Walton has drawn heavily on the works of anthropologists and students of myth. A central theme of this series is kingship at a time of conflict between old ways and new -- the Old Tribes, in which kingship came through the woman, and the New Tribes, whose men have seized power. Their use of force and intellect portends great travail for the world.

I think I can judge the book well enough for itself, but I have the advantage of
Scrolls

knowing an earlier retelling of the First Branch: *THE FATES OF THE PRINCES OF DYFED*, by Cenydd Morus (Kenneth Morris), published in 1914 by the Aryan Theosophical Press, Point Loma CA. Both agree that the hero must be tested and made fit and worthy for his greatest task by a series of ordeals and temptations. But how different they are otherwise! I had thought before that Miss Walton's style was "gorblimey" in places, but there the story is simply too heavy with portents. Her description of Gorsedd Arberth:

Black as night it loomed above them, that huge and awful Mound: the terror of their childhoods, the ancient, fabled home of fear. Monstrous it seemed, too vast to be the work of human hands, yet the long dead had piled it above the bones of Dyvd's first King, of him whose name and race no man now knew; and the gates of whatever world had opened to receive him never had quite closed again. [p 111]

Did even Lovecraft lay it on so thickly? There is much of this in the first part, where Pwyll must overcome a series of monsters and the fearful or lustful promptings of his heart before he can take on Arawn's enemy Havgan. I think too that such prose does not mix well with italicized thoughts in the style of the modern novel. Morris's style, if flowery, is at least consistent; and it is much closer to the tradition, with its repetition of formulae and its joyous use of hyperbole piled on hyperbole. A random sample:

The valley began to fill with such a host that he had never seen nor dreamed of the like of it since his life began. Thousands of chariots, bright and lofty, long-scythed, made of brass, came streaming along the road; innumerable warriors covered the hill-sides; proud battle-bards in advance, with loud-stringed, ringing, martial harps, and with noble and exalted utterance of vocal song, and that thunderous with the desire for war. [p 125]

The like of this is a pleasure to read aloud; Miss Walton's prose is often an embarrassment.

Morris chose to treat the fight with Havgan briefly, then sending Pwyll on a quest for the bag in which he traps Gwawl, and next facing him with a series of temptations on Gorsedd Arberth. He fails at them, at great cost to himself and Rhiannon, but is given a second chance and prepared for a great quest, told of in *BOOK OF THE THREE DRAGONS*, by Kenneth Morris (NY: Longmans, 1930). The second half of the present book tells of the quests of Pwyll's son Pryderi, who in Morris's version grows to manhood before setting out in search of his home and parents, and recovering the three birds of Rhiannon, lost through Pwyll's failure.

Morris found his criteria for restoring the tale in his study of theosophy and bardism. His preface makes a surprising amount of sense. The optimism of his philosophy makes the difference, and the style and tone of his books grow out of it. Setbacks and defeats there will be, but they are as nothing to the triumphant storming of the gates of Infinity at the end of time. I hope these two books (I have not seen *THE SECRET MOUNTAIN*, unrelated stories) will soon be reprinted.

Dainis Bisenieks #####

Andres J Offutt: *CORMAC MAC ART: SWORD OF THE GAEL*, NY: Zebra Books, 1975; 251 pp, paper, \$1.50.

Andy Offutt has written a sequel to four novelettes by Robert E Howard, none published in Howard's life but combined in *TIGERS OF THE SEA* (Grant, cloth, 1974; Zebra, paper, 1975). The hero is Cormac mac Art, an Irishman exiled for homicide and roaming the seas with Wulphere the Dane and followers. The time is the end of +V, when King Arthur lived if he ever did.

CORMAC MAC ART tells of Cormac's rescue of an Irish prince and his sister from Norse Vikings; his parting with Wulphere; his return to Ireland; and his vindication. With plenty of action along the way, it's good fun.

A few small qualifications should not impair the reader's pleasure. Offutt seems uncertain as to whether the English spoken by his characters should be Elizabethan British or Modern Irish. He has also, perforce, adopted some of Howard's historical assumptions, which I believe erroneous: that Vikings were active at sea at this date and that the Picts were dark, squatty little Neanderthaloid folk. (See my *BLOND BARBARIANS AND NOBLE SAVAGES*, pp 23-29.)

Finally, all Howard's continuators labor under a difficulty. We are not crazy -- at least, not in the way that Robert Howard was. Lacking his delusions of persecution and other complexes, we tend to make our Conans and Cormacs more genial, amiable, genteel,

and considerate; and less abrupt, sullen, touchy, and ferocious than their models. Our heroes would be easier to get on with but somehow lack the deadly tension of their prototypes. Perhaps Andy and I should join one of those cults that claim to make their suckers into superbeings but drives them mad instead, to give us the right neuroses.

L Sprague de Camp #####

Lin Carter (ed.): *FLASHING SWORDS!* #2, Garden City NY: Nelson Doubleday (SF Book Club), 1973, 200 pp; Dell Books, 1974, paper, \$0.95.

Carter continues to trace Sword & Sorcery history in this volume. Again, he gives the background of the authors of the various stories in this anthology.

De Camp's "The Rug and the Bull" is the story of Gezun, a middle-aged magician now, and his efforts to keep himself and his family from want. Humor and action is sustained by clever situations and intrigue rather than by wittiness and slashing sword-play.

"The Jade Man's Eyes" is a tale of Elric by Michael Moorcock. Elric and Moonglum visit the land of Elric's ancestors. The tale is packed with bloody action; you'll not be bored by it by any means; but some of the brooding "magic" and eeriness of the earliest Elric stories seems to be missing here.

Andre Norton's "Toads of Grimmerdale" is a Witch World story which I found to be the most intriguing and suspenseful tale of either of the two *FLASHING SWORDS!* volumes. While Hertha, an outcast, seeks help and blessing for her unborn child from a saintly goddess, she also seeks revenge on the man who raped her by appealing to wicked spirits. The resolution is as fine a solution to the problem of good and evil pacts as any I've ever seen.

Brak the Barbarian swashbuckles his way into the "Ghouls Garden"; John Jakes is fully up to par here. Brak is on his way to rescue a fair lady from an evil magician so Brak can enjoy her himself. Since she is a lusty wench herself, they have a fine few days together before Brak -- as always -- sets out again for Khurdisan.

Jakes tells us that this story was inspired by a suspicion on the part of some of his correspondents that Brak didn't care much for girls. *Cósci Brak?* I don't think that Jakes knew what Brak means in Polish (when referring to an individual); it means deficient or lacking and the like.

As with *FLASHING SWORDS!* #1, the stories are all goodies, even though not oldies!

Bert Duch #####

Gardner Fox: *KYRIK FIGHTS THE DEMON WORLD*, NY: Leisure Books, 1975, 159 pp, paper, \$0.95.

Good old Kyrik continues his pursuit of adventure with his Gypsy companion Myrnis. Nothing world-shaking but not bad either. Fox's derivations are a bit too obvious: "Porthis" even gets killed in the same way as did Dumas's character "Porthos" in *DIX ANS PLUS TARD*. Moreover, when too many gods step into the final conflict, the human protagonists are dwarfed; it's too much "legislating yourself out of trouble".

L Sprague de Camp #####



Avram Davidson: *THE ENQUIRIES OF DOCTOR ESZTERHAZY*, NY: Warner Books, 1975, 206 pp, paper, \$1.25.

The Diplomacy game board is a map of the Europe of 1914. (There are a few exceptions: such mini-states as Montenegro and Luxembourg are left out.) However, the opening move of a Diplomacy game is "Spring 1901". It would seem that Allan B Calhamer, the game's designer, wrote the rules this way for mathematical convenience; "1" is a convenient number with which to label the first game year.

However, there were a few changes which took place in the map of Europe between 1901 and 1914. Most of them were concerned with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. The process began in 1908, when Austria-Hungary annexed the province of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This was really not much of a change, since the Dual Monarchy had been administering that Balkan region since 1878. But it kicked off a land grab. In 1911, Italy detached Libya and most of the Dodecanese Islands. The utter inability of the Turks to do anything about this inspired the small Balkan kingdoms to seek revenge for their long Ottoman captivity and liberate those of their kinsmen still under the rule of Istanbul. At that time, Turkey-in-Europe extended all the way to the Adriatic and comprised what are now Albania, Northern Greece, and Yugoslavian Macedonia.

In 1912, Serbia, Bulgaria, Rumania, Montenegro, and Greece fell upon the Turks and detached all these regions except the part of Thrace still under Turkish rule. This was followed by a squabble over the spoils, in which Bulgaria got the worst of it and the Diplomacy map achieved its present form. If the Diplomacy board were to be reconstructed on the model of 1901, it would be necessary to form from Albania, southern Serbia and Bulgaria, and northern Greece a Turkish province called "Makedonia", possessing no supply center and bordering on Greece, the Aegean, Constantinople, Bulgaria, Serbia, Trieste, and the Adriatic and Ionian Seas.

(Aside from this, the only political difference between 1901 and 1914 in Europe was the sundering in 1905 of the crown union between Sweden and Norway. But the two countries had been separately administered under that crown union, making no substantive change in the Diplomacy board.)

Among some historians it is fashionable to decry the fall of Old Europe's empires and to lament that the 'quality of life' has declined since the Habsburgs, Hohenzollerns, Romanovs, and Osmanlis went on unemployment [*largely, one suspects, because of the over-enthusiasms of those who hailed the changes wrought by World War I as the greatest thing since the discovery of round wheels*]. A good example of such tear-jerkers is Ludwig Reiners's 1955 book, *THE LAMPS WENT OUT IN EUROPE*. This is about the farthest that you can get in pro-German histories of World War I without plunging into a dreary morass of proto-Nazi and pro-Nazi tracts; Reiners seems to have set himself the task of making a case for the Central Powers that would not be rejected with scorn by inhabitants of the Entente Powers.

He did his best. Ludwig von Bismark is praised as the wisest and most moderate statesman of the 19th century, and his dismissal by the young Kaiser Wilhelm II is correctly assessed as an act of monumental folly. Reiners deals moderately with the English and French statesmen whom some nationalistic German historians have made the sinister architects of Germany's doom. The Kaiser and Germany's wartime Chancellors are the men whose folly destroyed the Reich; the German field officer and private soldier are praised to the skies. The Pan-German League, whose expansionist statements were eagerly reprinted in the Entente countries as examples of Germany's bloodthirsty militarism, are condemned as men who were out of touch with reality (which they were) and out of touch with the mainstream of German popular and governmental thought (which they were not).

Reiners condemns the policies that left Germany with only one ally, but praises that ally: the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Even in 1914 the Austro-Hungarian Empire was a survival from the past. The state had no national basis as France or Germany had; it was simply an accumulation of all the lands that had been inherited or conquered by the members of the Habsburg Dynasty, and had not yet been wrested from them in turn. It was ruled under a crazy accumulation of laws, by a staggered (and staggering) representational system that grossly favored some nationalities and social classes at the expense of others. There were no fewer than 11 major nationalities; in approximate pecking order they were Germans, Hungarians, Poles, Italians, Czechs, Ukrainians, Slovenians, Hrvats, Slovaks, Rumanians, and Serbs. Smaller communities of Jews, Moravians, Gypsies, Turks, and Szeklers further complicated matters.

In any case, the happy, golden age under the Habsburgs properly belongs in the realm of fantasy. And it is in the realm of fantasy that Avram Davidson places it with his new paperback, *THE ENQUIRIES OF DOCTOR ESZTERHAZY*. This is a collection of short stories about the mysteries solved by Dr Englebart Eszterhazy, a resident of Bella, the beautiful capital city of "The Triune Monarchy of Scythia-Pannonia-Transbalkania".

The Triune Monarchy is of course a pastiche of the historical Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary*, and elsewhere I have already shown the correlation between the two realms. The Triune Monarchy is a concentration of such nationalities as "Scythian Goths", "Avars", "Slovatchkos", "Hyperboreans", "Vloxes", "River Tartars", "Mountain Tsiganes", etc. Its ruler is a lovable, dedicated, popular, but not overly bright man of 81, "King-Emperor Ignats Louis". Under his benevolent if slightly absent-minded rule all these nationalities live in tolerable peace despite some intra-ethnic strain, high rents, bad crops, chronic unemployment, and various operations of the supernatural or unusual which the hero is called upon to explain, sometimes with success.

*Imagine the silly reviewers claiming that it is "mythical! No wonder the country is going to the damnation bow-wows! If I had stock in a stagecoach company I would hold on to it.

--- A Davidson



The ambience of the stories is about 1910. There are cross-references with the literature of the time. Two of the Triune Monarchy's neighbors are the Kingdoms of Graustark and Ruritania. A naval attaché of "a neighboring power ... Oberzeeleutnant-Commander Adler" complains that since the Triune Monarchy has no seacoast he will be unable "to put my finishing touches on the revision of my monograph on the deep-sea fishes". (Anyone who doesn't recognize Commander Adler should be sentenced to a solitary confinement with Baring-Gould's annotated edition of the Sherlock Holmes stories.) Very often the plotting of the stories is less than satisfactory, as Davidson yields to the temptation to sacrifice tight plotting and narrative coherence to the special effects. This is a chronic problem in his fiction, which is often compensated by his wit, humor, and erudition.

Unfortunately, Davidson has been prevailed upon, or himself prevailed, to include a map of the Triune Monarchy in this book. In this reviewer's opinion the map is a mistake, since the charm of the Doctor Eszterhazy stories depends in some respect on their ambiguity. Also, the map disagrees with statements which appear in some of the stories [*going from Bella to Apollograd via Avar-Ister seems to be the long way around by the map, but the text implies that to be the direct route, for example*], and has too obviously the character of an afterthought. According to the map (By John E Westfall [and dated "Bella, '03"]], the Triune Monarchy is not Austria-Hungary at all, but a separate state that extends from Adrianopolis across the Lower Balkans to Bosnia. Pannonia is cut out of central Bulgaria, leaving the remnants as Bulgaria, Graustark, and Ruritania. The Scythian component is western Wallachia, southern Transylvania, and the Banat. (For the purpose of Davidson's geography a range of mountains crosses the Wallachian plains, and the River Ister cuts across the Banat. In fact, "Ister" is an old name for the Danube, here shown as an entirely separate stream. "Transbalkania" is a mixture of various Slavic-sounding peoples, located where more orthodox geography places Bosnia and Hravatia. An independent Kingdom of Illyria supersedes Hercegovina and the Dalmatian coast. Westfall's map does include Montenegro, which both Calhamer's Diplomacy map and the one in Dedijs's book turn into part of Austria-Hungary! Turkey has the same boundaries as in the actual Europe of 1901.



Dr Eszterhazy is a faithful subject of muddled old Ignats Louis. His "devotion to the Person of the Imperial Presence was based on a deep-seated preference for King Log over King (or President or Comrade) Stork". In the last and most haunting of the stories, "The King's Shadow Has No Limits", Eszterhazy finds his sovereign apparently wandering around his capital in an astral incognito, while Ignats Louis's body is tossing in a fitful fever back at the Palace. The loyal doctor tries to find the reason for the King-Emperor's malaise. Mind and body wandering together, the old man tells him: "God has given this weary old body such length of days so that this Empire and its many nations might have some few more years of peace... After me, this Empire will sink like Atlantis, and the children of these children will look for it upon the maps in vain." The story ends with Eszterhazy shuddering over this preternatural foreboding.

John Boardman #####

Lin Carter (ed.): *KINGDOMS OF SORCERY*, Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1976, 218 pp, \$6.95

Lin Carter apologises for fantasy in the introduction to this book, which seems ridiculous when you realize that he's talking about the oldest form of human literature, running from Homer through Shakespeare up to the present; and when you look on the contents page and see the names of such acknowledged literary masters as Voltaire, Poe, George Macdonald, T H White, and J R R Tolkien. Perhaps this hat in hand, "won't you take a look please?" attitude is needed to draw new readers; and if that's the case, then the stance is appropriate, because *KINGDOMS OF SORCERY* is definitely designed for new readers. Lin has done a splendid job in arranging samples from the whole range of fantasy writing for the completely uninitiated reader, presenting these samples both chronologically and by subject and approach, so that the reader moves from Voltaire and Beckford on up to C S Lewis and Richard Adams, while at the same time viewing Fantasy-as-Saga, Fantasy-as-Parable, et cetera. Most of the selections are excerpts from major novels: *VATHEK*, *LILITH*, *THE MISTRESS OF MISTRESSES*, *THE WELL OF THE UNICORN*, *THE SWORD IN THE STONE* (with a scene from the original that does not appear in *ONCE AND FUTURE KING*), *THE LION*, *THE WITCH*, *AND THE WARDROBE*, *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*, and *WATERSHIP DOWN*. They're all highlights, expertly chosen but useless to anyone who already has the books in question.

These fragments take up a little over half the anthology, the rest being short pieces of varying interest. Carter starts out with Voltaire's "The History of Babouc the Scythian", first telling us how he was bored with the episodic and didactic *CANDIDE*, and then presenting us with this thinly veiled allegory about the the good and evil aspects of society in which the hero examines a different stratum of life in Persepolis about every page and a half. If you like Voltaire's acid wit, this is for you; but don't be expecting a story in the usual sense of the word, because this isn't one.

Robert Barlow's "The Tomb of the God" is a rarity, reprinted for the first time since its initial appearance in a 1934 fanzine. It's a short (3 pages), characterless fable about an unsuccessful attempt to rob the tomb of an Ancient Unmentionable, derived from Dunsany, Lovecraft, and Smith; and it's inferior to all three. It will come as a surprise to those who know Barlow only from his "Till All the Seas" in the Lovecraft revision volume, *THE HORROR IN THE MUSEUM*, precisely because it does show story-telling ability; but I'm still not sure it deserves to be exhumed. It's not bad; but it's not very good either, though above average for fanzine fiction.

Definitely worth reprinting is L Sprague de Camp's "The Owl and the Ape", a short episode from the Pusâdian cycle about a wizard who sends his boy to an auction of magic artifacts and wishes he hadn't. I found the writing a little clumsy, with expository lumps just shoe-horned in; but the tale does deliver a few pages of entertainment, which is all it was ever intended to do.

Carter himself is present with "The Twelve Wizards of Ong", and he comes off as the guy who tries harder and doesn't always make it even to second place. Like most of Lin's fiction, this specimen is extremely derivative. Most of his ideas come from *THE DYING EARTH*. Vance's "Live Boots" become a "Live Sword", and once more we meet the little men who ride dragonflies and can be bribed with sweets. Also there's a character named Chan (Vance: Chun, the unavoidable), a wizard who collects human eyeballs on strings (one of Chun's unavoidable hobbies too), and a book of spells created by the sorcerer Paroullian (Vance: Phandaal) which is the object of much questing and dirty work by rival groups of mages. A very obvious slip occurs when the morning sun casts a "sanguinary beam". You know, blood-red, like the fading sun of Vance's 20-Millionth Century. Of course, it's wildly out of place in a story set in the Jurassic, when the world was much newer. [We





fear our esteemed reviewer has perhaps too little acquaintance with "rosy fingered Dawn" and the phenomenon of sunrise.]

The style borrows much from Clark Ashton Smith, including most of his mistakes. Carter gains nothing by using rare and often imprecise words when ordinary ones would do. For example, if "arboreaceous fuel" had just been called "firewood", the reader would have been that much less aware of the style and more aware of the story. Also, as in Smith, the characters are all one-dimensional despite a few funny hats; and there's no difference at all in motivation or personality between the good guys and the bad guys, save that the good guys avoid stepping on the little men and are rescued by them in the end. But, despite the fact that the story is not particularly well written, it does have the power to sweep you along once the plot begins to get rolling. Carter has the basic narrative knack; and you do read his things to the end, even though you may not want to re-read them.

Other short entries: "The Two Best Thieves in Lankhmar" is routine Fafhrd & Mouser (from *SWORDS AGAINST WIZARDRY*); Edgar Allen Poe's "Silence" and "Shadow" you have probably read elsewhere; and Clark Ashton Smith's three prose poems, "Sadastor", "The Passing of Aphrodite", and "From the Crypts of Memory", are unquestionably among his very best although they're readily available in the Neville Spearman reprints. William Morris's "The Folk of the Mountain Door" is a fragment of an unfinished romance, never before in print except in the *COMPLETE WORKS* and the fanzine *Phantasmicom* (#7, 1972) but it doesn't amount to much; and if Carter wanted to introduce people to Morris he would have done a lot better with "Lindenberg Pool", which is not only of the same length but also is a complete story and one of his best.

To sum up, a book for beginners only, of little interest to the veteran fan. It would be absolutely ideal for a course in fantasy, because it would let the students sample just about everybody without burdening them with a massive reading list. The only real omission for this purpose is a story by Lord Dunsany, who was one of the best short story writers in the field ever and was definitely more important than Robert Barlow.

Darrell Schweitzer #####

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Swackles:

ON CLAYMORES

by L Sprague de Camp

About claymores (Amra v2#64 pp 4-8): I understand that the name comes from *claidheamh mōr* (or *claidhmhichean mhora*), "great sword". Down to circa 1600, this meant a two-handed sword, with the quillons angled towards the point.

(I won't try to give the pronunciation, because the two dialects of Gaelic, namely Irish and Scottish, are among the most difficult languages in the world to pronounce right. At the Abbey Theater in Dublin, I once heard a Russian play, Tchekhov's *THE PROPOSAL*, given in Irish. To one who speaks neither, Irish and Russian sound much alike.)

At about that time, 1600, somebody brought to Scotland the +XVI Venetian basket-hilted broadsword, the *schiaivona*, in which the guard fitted the hand so snugly that a right-handed sword could not be used by a left-handed man and vice versa. The Scots adopted the *schiaivona* about the time they abandoned the two-handed claymore. Having an old word without a living referent and a new weapon, they applied the former to the latter. We do it all the time; e.g., we speak of a power-driven vessel's "sailing", call the truck drivers' union the Teamsters, and use expressions like "to shoot one's [crossbow] bolt" and "a flash in the [flintlock musket] pan".

Since the claymore, in the original two-handed sense, was called a "great sword", there must have been an ordinary one-handed *mōr* in use beside it. I know of no existing specimens of such swords, all of which, probably, either were converted to *schiaivone* by fitting them with basket hilts or were allowed to rust away to nought in the dank Caledonian clime. My guess -- no more -- is that they had simple cross-hilts like most medieval European swords or plain unguarded hilts like the later dirk.

Villanova PA 19085

ON CONANS

by John P Conlon

Add Conanic names: Kull & Sons, Jewelers, High St, Columbus OH. Also, in [A Conan] Doyle's *SIR NIGEL*, a comment about a Breton group assembling for a knightly argument. "None of the great names of Brittany, not a Conan or a Rohan . . ."

52 Columbia St, Newark OH 43055

ON CONANIC SIZE

by Jim Cawthorn

Conan six-foot-six and 300 pounds? Everybody (well, me) knows he is six-foot-three and 220 pounds. I had an uncle of roughly those dimensions who went around most of the known world in the Green Howards regiment, between the 1st and 2nd World Wars, and he was a hard man to stop, even minus a sword or rifle.

Don't think Frazetta's covers are good portraits of Conan. What they are good portraits of is the spirit of war, the essential something-or-other of the warrior. I feel that this is what Frazetta meant to convey. They don't resemble Howard's physical description of Conan very much.

106 Oxford Gardens, London W10 6NG

ON AMRAS

by L Sprague de Camp

In Fort-de-France, Martinique, is a Syrian gift shop called AMRA 116.

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ON CLAYMORES

by Buck Coulson

"... But we've sought the country o'er
Wi' cannon and claymore,
And still they are before,
Aikendrum, Aikendrum;
We may seek for evermore,
Aikendrum."

Text from Hogg's *THE JACOBITE RELICS OF SCOTLAND*, published in 1821. "Aikendrum" is even a better-known song than the one Jerry Pournelle cites, and not all that much earlier. My recording is "Classic Scots Ballads", by McColl and Seeger.

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Only a bat, whose sharp ears caught one sound,
Knows that the Mouser is on business bound.

-- Fritz Leiber